



Why rely on the high street lab to print your photos the way you want, when you can print them yourself at home or in the office? We test eight photo printers that promise perfect picture quality

Photo printers

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When it comes to showing off a good photograph, nothing beats a traditional print. Of course, these days traditional-looking prints don't just come from film cameras. For some time high street labs have been able to print digital photographs from memory cards. But given that shooting digitally is convenient and cheap, trekking to a shop can seem like an expensive chore.

Printer manufacturers have been quick to catch on to this. At least seven companies make photo printers designed to create standard 6x4" prints. Fierce competition makes this a good time to buy a photo printer. But with every manufacturer

claiming to offer lab-quality results, it's hard to know which printer to choose.

SNAP TO ATTENTION

We compare a selection of compact inkjet and dye-sublimation printers and put the two leading photo-printing technologies to the test. We've also reviewed two inkjets that print larger A4 photos to see if compact printers are missing a trick. We'll show you which products offer the most features, the lowest running costs, the fastest prints and the best image quality. If you're keen to show off your photographs at their best, this Labs test should help you pick the perfect printer for your needs.



CHOOSING A... PHOTO PRINTER

You don't have to spend loads to get beautiful photo prints, but there are important financial decisions to make, not least whether you should opt for an inkjet or a dye-sublimation system. This guide will help

Superior print quality is vital in a photo printer, but it's not the only consideration when choosing one. Many of the devices in this test produce prints that will do your photos justice, but it's no use having a great printer if it won't communicate with your camera easily. It's important to consider costs too. Expensive prints aren't always the best, while cheap prints may be no good at all.

The printers in this Labs test work in one of two ways. The Dell, Kodak and Selphy CP400 printers use a technology called dye-sublimation, while the other systems are all inkjets.

JET STREAM

Inkjets print with up to eight coloured inks, which they spray on the page in tiny droplets from moving print heads. The best inkjet in this test crams over eight million droplets into a single square inch of paper. It's hard to spot individual drops because they are so small: a single 10ml ink cartridge can produce several billion of them. The human eye is fooled into seeing areas of continuous colour.

By varying the proportions of each ink it sprays in one place, the inkjet can produce millions of shades. However, complex colours require a large pattern of dots. Because of this, the effective resolution of an inkjet is much lower than its quoted figure.

SUB DIVISION

Dye-sublimation printers don't use liquid ink at all. They have a ribbon that is permeated with cyan, magenta and yellow dyes. When the print head heats the dyes they become a gas, which transfers to the photo paper before becoming solid again.

Each colour is printed separately, so the paper moves across the stationary print head three times. On each pass, the printer controls the amount of dye it transfers by varying the heat it applies. Dye-sublimation printers can create 256 different intensities of each colour, so the final print can eventually have a range of over 16 million shades.

▼ Can you tell what it is yet? Dye-sublimation printers lay down one colour at a time, but require a deceptive amount of space



You can't see the individual dye molecules, so dye-sublimation printers don't suffer from grain. They don't print at the high resolutions required by an inkjet, because each region they print appears as a solid colour. A dye-sublimation printer normally produces 90,000 coloured blocks to create every square inch of photograph; the best inkjet on test can fit 92 dots inside each block.

HANDSOME PRINTS

Each method has its pros and cons. It's often possible to spot a little grain in light regions of an inkjet print. Magenta dots in particular can be picked up by beady eyes. Inkjets are also much slower than dye-subs and it's difficult to calculate how much their photo prints cost. This is because different subjects, quality and layout settings all affect the amount of ink they consume.

Dye-sublimation printers are much faster and use ink ribbons that always print a set number of pages. However, these tend to need replacing more often than inkjet cartridges. Also, dye-sublimation printers can't print the full length of a sheet. All dye-sublimation prints have perforated tear-off strips that you need to remove.

Because dye-sublimation prints are produced by diffusion, they can lack sharpness compared to the best inkjet results. This effect can be exaggerated if a printer fails to align each colour pass perfectly. Dusty or dirty paper can cause odd blemishes.

SUPPLIES, SUPPLIES

To keep your printer running, you'll need to replace its ink or dye ribbon regularly. You'll also get through plenty of 6x4" photo paper. To keep things simple, most manufacturers offer packs that combine matched quantities of both.

We counted how many copies of our test photos each inkjet made before its cartridges were all empty. Some dried up after only 45 prints. However, we found that costs generally didn't depend on print technology. You can see our full results in the table on page 179.

CARD TRICK

There are several ways of transferring images to a



▲ Little and large: some compact photo printers are much smaller than others. Epson's PictureMate is the largest in this test

photo printer. All the models on test can be connected to a PC, but only Kodak supplies a Universal Serial Bus (USB) cable. All except Epson's Stylus R800 have a PictBridge port. If you have a compatible camera, you can connect it directly to this and print without a PC, but you have only basic printing options such as which shot to print.

A few of the devices here can read information directly from your camera's memory card. These printers generally offer you more advanced layout and quality choices, and can also act as a card reader for a connected PC. It's essential that they support the same card format as your camera, though. Two of the devices on test have card slots, but won't read the popular xD format.

Kodak's Printer Dock has an Imagelink connector to recharge and print from compatible cameras, and Canon's Selphy DS700 prints from any compatible infrared device, such as a camera phone, for example.



Most photo printers support PictBridge, but you'll get more control if you buy one with a card slot to match your camera



COMPACT INKJETS

**HP**
Photosmart 325

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £95 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.hp.co.uk

HP's Photosmart 325 is small and portable. It's similar to the Photosmart 375 that we reviewed in *What's New, Shopper* April 2005. However, it makes do with a smaller colour screen and has no Bluetooth adaptor.

As the smallest inkjet in this test, the 325 requires the least desk space but HP has still found room for memory card slots that cover most popular formats. Its diminutive shell houses only a single ink cartridge, however, and the printer's minimum droplet size of five picolitres is the largest here.

A small colour screen displays pictures from inserted memory cards, but if you prefer to select images from a print you can make index sheets. Navigating around the direct printing menu is a little cumbersome with the squidgy back, forward and OK buttons. Layout options are limited to one, two or four shots per page, and images must be selected individually as there's no option to print them all.

Like Canon's Selphy DS700, this printer uses only cyan, magenta and yellow inks. Its prints look decent from a distance, but grain is clearly visible close up. Some fine details are lost to this granularity. Colours in our test photos were slightly oversaturated, which enhanced certain pictures but made others a little gaudy. Our black-and-white test print was satisfactory.

The 325 was easily the fastest inkjet when printing our standard 6x4" photos, delivering all six in 13 minutes 36 seconds. Its high-capacity 14ml colour cartridge lasted for 130 prints, so each should cost around 30p, but the printer is supplied with a 7ml cartridge and only a 10-sheet paper pack.

VERDICT

The Photosmart 325 is small, stylish and easy to use. It's quite fast and isn't unduly expensive to run, but its print quality isn't really up to the job.

✓ Portable, fast and simple to use

✗ Grainy prints

SPECIFICATIONS Three-colour inkjet, 1,200x4,800dpi maximum resolution, USB interface. **Part code** Q3414B

**EPSON**
PictureMate

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £100 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.comDETAILS www.epson.co.uk

The PictureMate is the oldest of the 6x4" printers in this test, but its strong print quality impressed us when we reviewed it in *What's New, Shopper* September 2004. It has a similar shape and layout to HP's Photosmart 325, but the Epson printer is twice the size. This makes it a little less convenient to carry around, despite its integrated handle, but it does mean that it has the room to accommodate six inks.

The high quality of this printer's engine helps give it the edge over competing inkjets. It adds red, blue and black inks to the usual cyan, magenta and yellow, giving it a wider colour range. However, getting the best results means printing at the Enhance fine detail setting, which is no good if you're in a hurry.

If you are in a rush, you might also bemoan the manual head alignment, which involves choosing the best examples from two sets of 15 patterns. This tedious, unfriendly routine requires sharp eyesight, and Epson needs to improve it.

Ink comes in a single consumable that looks like a flattened VHS tape and slots easily into the printer's rear. It comes bundled with 100 sheets of photo paper and should last long enough to print on them all. At 22p each, the prints work out the cheapest we've seen from any compact printer.

Print quality is great, with excellent detailing in dark areas and particularly accurate colours. This doesn't always flatter the subject, though, and a few of the shots with prominent skin tones could do with a little more warmth. This printer produced the best greyscale photos here when set to print in black and white.

VERDICT

If you need the convenience of a dedicated photo printer, the PictureMate is a brilliant choice. Faster printing and a colour preview screen would improve it, but it's still great value.

✓ Affordable; excellent print quality; low costs

✗ No preview screen; slow; manual head alignment

SPECIFICATIONS Six-colour inkjet, 1,440x5,760dpi maximum resolution, USB interface. **Part code** C11C556012

**CANON**
Selphy DS700

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £132 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.misco.co.ukDETAILS www.canon.co.uk

Those nostalgic for Sega's Dreamcast games console might be attracted to the Selphy DS700. Its size and design is uncannily similar, down to the circular lid on top that opens for cartridge replacement. The box even contains a composite video cable for connecting the printer to a TV.

This apparent identity crisis is explained by the Selphy's unusual ability to output preview images to a TV screen. This and the supplied remote control make viewing and choosing photos convenient in the home. It's an interesting alternative to a built-in screen, but direct printing is limited to a simple print-all mode if you don't have a TV to hand.

It seems odd that Canon has chosen an inkjet engine for the DS700 when all the other models in the Selphy range use dye-sublimation. A tiny BCI-16 ink cartridge helps keep the printer reasonably compact, but it's much bigger than the CP400 and still feeds paper out of the back.

The ink cartridge has a particularly low capacity. The DS700 produced only 45 photos before it needed replacing. Though hard to find online, twin BCI-16 packs are available for around £20. Even so, the Selphy's photos work out at 51p each, the highest cost of any here.

Printing with just three colours, the DS700 can't offer the photo quality to compensate. Its small two-picolitre droplets help it produce less-grainy images than the Photosmart 325, but not by much. A slight pinkish cast made many photos too warm, but improved some of our portrait shots. However, dark regions lacked subtle detailing and the Selphy's muddy black-and-white print was the worst we saw.

VERDICT

Hooking up a TV to a photo printer is a promising idea, and the DS700 implements it well. It's just a shame that its prints are too expensive and not high enough quality.

✓ Innovative TV interface

✗ Extortionate print costs; grainy prints; no xD card support

SPECIFICATIONS Three-colour inkjet, 1,200x4,800dpi maximum resolution, USB interface. **Part code** 8584A011AA



DYE-SUBLIMATION PRINTERS



CANON Selphy CP400

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £84 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.canon.co.uk

Canon's CP400 is only about the size of a thick paperback book, but its long input tray means it occupies about twice the desk space. Like the Dell and Kodak dye-sublimation printers, photo paper passes out of the rear during printing, so a further small area must be kept clear.

The CP400 has no memory card slots or preview screen, but it is the least expensive printer on test. Canon sells bundles of paper and ink cassettes in packs of 36 or 108 prints, but the Selphy arrives with a measly five. The postcard-sized media has perforated borders that snap off cleanly, while address lines on the back mean you can send them in the post. You need to use a marker pen to avoid smearing, though.

Direct printing support is limited to PictBridge cameras or devices that support Canon's own Direct Print standard. It's straightforward enough to connect a compatible device and make prints, but you have fewer advanced options than you get on a printer with card slots and a preview screen.

The CP400 was the second-fastest dye-sublimation printer in our tests and comfortably ahead of the fastest inkjet. Although it lagged behind the Dell, its colours were more accurate. Prints from the Selphy were much sharper and showed a greater degree of fine detail, with none of the colour ghosting we saw with the other dye-subs. However, its black-and-white printing was too dark and lacked sufficient contrast.

Using the larger supply packs, prints from the CP400 cost a little over 24p each. This makes it cheaper to run than every other printer here except the Epson PictureMate.

VERDICT

The Selphy is a simple and swift printer that produces decent photos. While we prefer the PictureMate, this is a fine choice for anyone who needs the higher speed of a dye-sub.



Affordable; good print quality; reasonable costs



No card slots or preview screen

SPECIFICATIONS Four-pass dye-sub printer, 300x300dpi maximum resolution, USB interface. **Part code** 9801A007AA



DELL Photo Printer 540

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £110 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Dell 08701 524699

DETAILS www.dell.co.uk

Dell's Photo Printer 540 is about the same size as the Kodak Printer Dock. Dell uses a four-pass dye-sublimation engine made by Kodak, but the two companies' printers have big differences.

The Dell is the only dye-sub here with a preview screen and memory card slots, but these don't support the common xD format. The screen is slow to respond to key presses, making the printer's menu system seem a little clunky.

When it first starts, the 540 needs to be told an operating region. The options are listed alphabetically, so scrolling through to the UK is something of an irritation. The printer frequently uses the display to remind you to buy Dell consumables but even when you've set the region to the UK the phone number that comes up in the reminder is American.

Before starting direct print jobs, the 540 confirms the number of prints remaining and the number needed to complete the job. We found this very useful. However, regular wheeling about supply levels from the LCD and PC driver interface became annoying.

The 540 was by far the fastest printer here, producing all six of our test photos in under six and a half minutes. This was around 25 seconds faster per print than the Selphy CP400, but prints from the Dell were inferior.

We noticed a lack of sharpness in photos, with a blurring out of fine details, producing a soft-focus effect. This might flatter older family members, but it did nothing for buildings or landscapes. Warm colour reproduction helped produce ruddy skin tones in one outdoor portrait, but the blue sky took on a purple tinge.

VERDICT

The Dell is keenly priced for its specification. Its high speed is welcome where quick photo printing is a priority, but we would prefer to wait longer for higher quality prints.



Memory card reader and preview screen



Poor print quality; no xD card support

SPECIFICATIONS Four-pass dye-sub printer, 300x300dpi maximum resolution, USB interface. **E-value code** 305-540



KODAK EasyShare Printer Dock Series 3

RATING ★★

PRICE £120 inc VAT

SUPPLIER <http://uk.insight.com>

DETAILS www.kodak.co.uk

Kodak's Printer Dock printers are aimed at owners of Kodak cameras, such as the Z740 reviewed in our digital camera Labs test on page 166. However, they can be used with other manufacturers' products too. Cameras that support the new Imagelink standard, such as the Z740, can dock on top of the printer using a special connector.

When you connect an Imagelink-compatible camera it integrates with the Printer Dock's controls, acting as a preview screen. The camera is recharged at the same time, and its contents can be transferred quickly to a connected PC. The dock itself has no memory card slots or screen, so owners of other camera brands have to use a PictBridge connection.

The Kodak has a habit of returning quickly to power-saving mode, where no lights are shown and no key presses elicit a response. Sending a print job woke it up immediately, but we kept thinking it had been unplugged.

The EasyShare was the slowest of the dye-sub printers, but it finished our six standard test photos more than four minutes ahead of the Photosmart 325. Its prints seemed similar to those from the Dell 540, but slightly warmer.

In both printers, we noticed that bold colours such as saturated reds seemed to have soft, diffuse outlines, particularly visible when they bordered white regions. The Printer Dock exhibited a similar soft-focus effect, too. Black-and-white prints were better than those from the Selphy CP400, but were nothing special.

VERDICT

It's difficult to get the best from the Printer Dock without an Imagelink camera. It's best bought in a bundle with Kodak's Z740 but it lags behind the Selphy CP400 for value, speed and quality.



Integrates well with Imagelink-compatible cameras



Poor print quality; pricy to buy and run

SPECIFICATIONS Four-pass dye-sub printer, 300x300dpi maximum resolution, USB interface. **Part code** 1116451



DESKTOP INKJETS

HP
Photosmart 8150

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £124 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.hp.co.uk

We reviewed the Photosmart 8150 in our photo printers Labs test in *Shopper* December 2004, when it impressed us with its direct printing support and decent photos. At the time it cost £170, but price drops mean it now competes with the compact printers in this test. We were interested to see how its performance compared.

This is the most flexible printer here, though it isn't as readily portable as the compact devices. It has separate paper trays for 6x4" and A4 paper, and can print borderless pictures on either size. Its memory card slots cover all popular formats. It has a 64mm colour preview screen with an easy-to-use menu system. It's the only printer in this test that can be upgraded with a duplex unit or second paper tray.

It comes with a standard photo cartridge and HP's lower capacity tri-colour cartridge, giving it six-ink printing out of the box. Fresh, high-capacity supplies printed 158 shots in our test, so each photo print should cost around 35p.

Using six inks the 8150 delivered high-quality photos, but they weren't completely free of grain. Some test shots seemed too sharp, making the grass of our barn image appear unnatural. On some prints, tiny track-wheel marks left by the paper transport were visible in dark regions of the page.

Black-and-white prints were great, but HP's three-grey cartridge is available for those who print plenty of greyscale. If you fit the optional black cartridge, the Photosmart can produce plain-paper text documents in no time.

VERDICT

The Photosmart 8150 matches the best compact printers on performance and offers the extra flexibility of A4 printing. It's not the cheapest to run, but it's ideal if you don't need to carry your photo printer around with you.

✓ Easy to use; decent print quality; flexible

✗ Above average print costs; best text printing requires a cartridge change

SPECIFICATIONS Six-colour inkjet, 1,200x4,800dpi maximum resolution, USB interface. **Part code** Q3399B

EPSON
Stylus Photo R800

RATING ★★★

PRICE £206 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.misco.co.ukDETAILS www.epson.co.uk

Epson's Stylus Photo R800 is the most expensive printer on test but it doesn't support any form of direct printing. However, we've included it for comparison because its photo prints are the best we've seen from any inkjet.

The R800 has no PictBridge port or memory card reader, because it's aimed at serious photographers who will edit and print photos from a PC. Its USB interface is the faster Hi-Speed standard, however, and it's the only printer here with a FireWire port.

The printer has a roll-feeder attachment and will print custom panoramic or banner sheets up to 594mm long. It supports regular paper sizes up to A4 and will print on coated CDs. Its output tray can be moved between two positions, but it doesn't seem especially rigid or robust in the standard configuration.

There was no visible grain or banding and you can't tell that the R800's photos are from an inkjet. Colours are vivid yet realistic and black-and-white prints show good contrast and shading. Prints are sharp, with accurately reproduced fine details, yet look more natural than those from the Photosmart 8150.

The Epson's driver seemed reluctant to crop enough from our digital images for borderless printing, though. Most of our prints had narrow borders along their shorter edges.

After more than 400 6x4" prints, we found that our run-down tests had barely dented the R800's matt black or red ink levels, and were forced to abandon them. We estimate from our results that each print should cost 30p or less.

VERDICT

The R800 is expensive and compared to the other inkjets it isn't particularly fast. It prints the best photos here, but we would recommend it only if you will print high-resolution A4 images regularly.

✓ Fantastic print quality; CD and roll-paper support

✗ Expensive to buy; no direct printing

SPECIFICATIONS Eight-colour inkjet, 1,440x5,760dpi maximum resolution, USB Hi-Speed and FireWire. **Part code** C11C550021CU

PRINTING
AWAY FROM
HOME

Printing photos at home is more convenient than using film and a photo lab, but digital printing services are still a worthwhile alternative. Most high street developers have terminals that let you make quick and cheap prints from a memory card. These can produce 50 6x4" prints in an hour, outpacing all the printers here except the Dell 540.

If you can wait a little longer and prefer to stay at home, you could try one of several decent online services. To use them, you need to copy your photos to your PC, and upload them ready for printing. A holiday's worth of avid snapping might fill a 64MB memory card easily, so you'll need a broadband internet connection if you don't want to spend hours transferring your pictures.

SNAPPY DELIVERY

We looked at various photo-printing services in depth in 'Print your digital photos', *Shopper* June 2005 and we concluded that the online service at www.photobox.co.uk was the best. We sent Photobox the 16 images we used in this Labs test to see how the experience and results compared to home printing.

Our order for one set of borderless, glossy 6x4.5" prints was submitted at 4pm on a weekday and arrived by first class post the following day. Each print cost just 18p, but we also paid a flat fee of £1.50 for postage and packing. Pre-buying credits reduces the price of each print so larger orders should prove exceptionally good value.

IN THE FRAME

Photobox uses a Fujifilm FDI Minilab printer and the prints we received were excellent. The extra height of its 4.5" format is better suited to the shape of digital shots, so virtually none of the picture is lost to cropping. Enlargements and poster prints are available up to a 76x51cm print; 25 times the size of a 6x4" image.

Our experience with Photobox shows that a digital printing service can occasionally outperform home printers, provided you can get to the shops or wait for postal delivery. Using one makes particular sense if you have a large number of prints to get through. However, it can't match home printing for occasional use.



An online photo printing service such as Photobox can be useful if you have a large number of images



COMPACT INKJETS			DYE-SUBLIMATION PRINTERS				DESKTOP INKJETS	
MANUFACTURER	HP	EPSON	CANON	CANON	DELL	KODAK	HP	EPSON
Model	Photosmart 325	PictureMate	Selphy DS700	Selphy CP400	Photo Printer 540	EasyShare Printer Dock Series 3	Photosmart 8150	Stylus Photo R800
Rating	★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★
QUOTED SPEEDS								
Quoted speed, 6x4" photo	1m 30s	1m 54s	1m 25s	1m 21s	1m0s	1m 30s	1m 40s	39s
Test 4 (two 10x8" photos)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	12m 55s	10m 53s
Test 5 (six 6x4" photos)	13m 36s	28m 13s	20m 30s	8m 59s	6m 25s	9m 16s	17m 53s	18m 09s
PRINT QUALITY								
Maximum resolution	4,800x1,200dpi	5,760x1,440dpi	4,800x1,200dpi	300x300dpi	300x300dpi	300x300dpi	4,800x1,200dpi	5,760x1,440dpi
Minimum colour droplet size	5pl	2.5pl	2pl	N/A	N/A	N/A	5pl	1.5pl
Number of colours (cartridges)	3 (1)	6 (1)	3 (1)	3 plus overcoat (1)	3 plus overcoat (1)	3 plus overcoat (1)	6 (2)	7 plus gloss (8)
Quoted durability (source)	82 years (Wilhelm Institute)	104 years (Wilhelm Institute)	100 years (Canon)	100 years (Canon)	Not stated	Not stated	82 years (Wilhelm Institute)	80 years (Epson)
PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL								
Standard interfaces	USB, PictBridge USB	USB, PictBridge USB	USB, PictBridge USB, IrDA, composite TV out	USB, PictBridge USB	USB, PictBridge USB	USB, PictBridge USB	USB, PictBridge USB	USB Hi-Speed, FireWire
Optional interfaces	Q3395A bt300 Bluetooth adaptor £20	C12C824142 Bluetooth adaptor £53					Q3395A bt300 Bluetooth adaptor £20	
Dimensions (HxWxD)	118x220x115mm	163x256x154mm	79x215x127mm	56x171x282mm	82x191x303mm	83x188x334mm	171x480x394mm	198x495x307mm
Weight	1.2kg	2.7kg	1.8kg	1.0kg	1.7kg	1.2kg	7kg	8kg
Noise	55dB(A)	42dB(A)	39dB(A)	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	50dB(A)	45dB(A)
Power consumption printing	14.4W	13.5W	12W	60W	50W	Not stated	85W	20W
Power consumption standby	6.2W	4W	3W	4W	Not stated	Not stated	15W	Not stated
PAPER HANDLING								
Maximum paper size	6x4"	6x4"	6x4"	6x4"	6x4"	6x4"	A4/Legal, custom length up to 610mm	A4/Legal, Epson panoramic up to 594mm
Standard paper trays (capacity)	1 (20)	1 (20)	1 (Not stated)	1 (Not stated)	1 (20)	1 (25)	2 (100 A4, 15 6x4")	1 (100 A4)
Maximum paper trays (capacity)	1 (20)	1 (20)	1 (Not stated)	1 (Not stated)	1 (20)	1 (25)	3 (350 A4, 15 6x4")	1 (100 A4)
Duplex	No	No	No	No	No	No	Q3032A duplex accessory £54	No
PHOTO FEATURES								
Exif support	Yes	Yes	Yes 2.2	Yes 2.2	Yes 2.25	Yes 2.2	Yes	No
PictBridge support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
DPOF support	Yes	Yes	Yes 1.1	Yes 1.1	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Borderless printing	6x4"	6x4"	6x4"	6x4"	6x4"	6x4"	A4	A4
PC-less printing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Memory card support	CompactFlash, xD, SM, SD, MMC, MS/PRO, Microdrive	CompactFlash, xD, SM, SD, MMC, MS/PRO, Microdrive	CompactFlash, SM, SD, MMC, MS/PRO, Microdrive	No	CompactFlash, SM, SD, MMC, MS, USB-key	No	CompactFlash, xD, SM, SD, MMC, MS/PRO, Microdrive	No
CD printing	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
GENERAL								
Technology	Thermal inkjet	Piezo inkjet	Thermal inkjet	Four-pass dye-sublimation	Four-pass dye-sublimation	Four-pass dye-sublimation	Thermal inkjet	Piezo inkjet
Supported operating systems	Windows 98/Me/2000 Professional/XP, Mac OS X 10.1.5, 10.2, 10.3	Windows 98/Me/2000/XP, Mac OS 8.6 or later, OS X 10.2 or later	Windows 2000/XP, Mac OS X 10.2.1 or later	Windows 98 SE/Me/2000/XP, Mac OS X 10.1.5-10.3	Windows 2000/XP	Windows 98/Me/2000/XP, Mac OS X 10.2 or later	Windows 98/Me/2000 Professional/XP, Mac OS X 10.1.5, 10.2, 10.3	Windows 98/Me/2000/XP, various Mac OS 8.1-9.2, Mac OS X
Other features	38mm colour LCD, automatic head alignment	Mono LCD, direct save to compatible external CD-R and Zip drives	Remote control, direct printing from compatible camera phones		63mm colour LCD, free recycling of old printer	Imagelink camera dock	64mm colour LCD, automatic head alignment	Roll paper feeder, automatic head alignment
Other options	Q3424A carrying case £19, Q5599A battery £47		9818A002AA ink twin pack £20 from www.laoffice.co.uk	PCW-CP100 wide paper cassette £15, PCL-CP100 L size paper cassette £11, PCC-CP100 credit card size paper cassette £9	Carry case £18	Travel kit (camera bag, EasyShare battery, EasyShare rapid charger) £26, EasyShare Li-ion battery £15	#339 black ink cartridge £18, #100 grey ink cartridge £15, Q3447A 250-sheet paper tray £55	C13T054140-1 eight-cartridge kit £82
BUYING INFORMATION								
Price inc VAT	£95	£100	£132	£84	£110	£120	£124	£206
Quoted life of supplied ink (6x4" sheets)	90	100	75	5	10	10	135	Not stated
Tested life of supplied ink (6x4" photos)	65	104	45	5	10	10	Colour cartridge 86*/photo cartridge 144	Average 48 per cartridge*
Supplied photo paper (6x4" sheets)	10	20	None	5	10	10	10	None
Tested ink cost per photo	16.2p	N/A	21.9p	N/A	N/A	N/A	21.7p	19.1p*
Tested paper cost per photo	13.7p	N/A	29.3p	N/A	N/A	N/A	13.7p	11.1p
Tested total cost per photo	29.9p	21.8p	51.2p	24.3p	31.7p	37.9p	35.4p	30.2p*
Warranty duration and terms	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year exchange	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB
Supplier	www.dabs.com	www.savastore.com	www.misco.co.uk	www.savastore.com	Dell 08701 524699	http://uk.insight.com	www.dabs.com	www.misco.co.uk
Details	www.hp.co.uk	www.epson.co.uk	www.canon.co.uk	www.canon.co.uk	www.dell.co.uk	www.kodak.co.uk	www.hp.co.uk	www.epson.co.uk
Manufacturer part code	Q3414B	C11C556012	8584A011AA	9801A007AA	305-540	1116458	Q3399B	C11C550021CU

* Estimate

LABS VERDICT PHOTO PRINTERS

Our tests show that both inkjet and dye-sublimation printers can produce excellent results. But within each group, certain printers produce far better results than others.

Canon's Selphy CP400 is our favourite dye-sublimation printer. It delivers the speed and quality we would expect from this technology. While it is basic, it is easy to use, sensibly priced and inexpensive to run.

Overall, though, it doesn't quite match Epson's PictureMate. The prints from this inkjet are the cheapest we've seen from a home photo printer and they are also among the best. The photographs have accurate colours and high levels of detail,

though they print a little slowly. The lack of a colour preview screen might frustrate some users, but it does offer comprehensive direct printing support. It's an excellent compact printer and deserves our Best Buy award.

If you don't need the convenience and portability of a compact printer, we would recommend HP's Photosmart 8150. This inkjet can create A4 prints, letting you make the most of your favourite shots. Although its prints are a little expensive, they're extremely high quality. This is the most flexible printer in our test and has the best direct printing system, so it also wins a Best Buy award. **CS**

EPSON
PictureMate



HP
Photosmart 8150

